

RESULTS OF 2006 COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The AZRSA, in conjunction with the Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducts a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment of individuals with disabilities every three years. The SRC collaborated with the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the development of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Survey instrument, which also included the methodology used by the Northern Arizona University's (NAU) Social Research Laboratory (SRL). An ARSA staff member, who monitored this contract, regularly attended and reported to the SRC's Program Planning and Evaluation (PP&E) subcommittee. The PP&E subcommittee was apprised every other month regarding the data collection progress as reported by SRL. All outcomes of the Statewide Needs Assessment Project (SNAP) were reported to the full SRC, as well as the RSA Management Team. Other ongoing avenues that AZRSA uses to assist in the identification of needs include, but are not limited to, community provider meetings, management surveys and local consumer forums.

Introduction

The Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the AZRSA commissioned Northern Arizona University's (NAU) Social Research Laboratory (SRL) to co-design and manage an assessment of the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in the state of Arizona, in compliance with the Rehabilitation Act Title I, Section 361.29 (Public Law 105-220, August 7, 1998). The SRL has conducted an efficient and systematic data collection, evaluation, and assessment of employment-related needs of individuals with disabilities who require services in order to seek or maintain employment. The research design demonstrates a particular sensitivity to persons with the most significant disabilities, including minorities with disabilities, persons with disabilities who have been traditionally unserved and underserved under Title I, and other persons with disabilities served under the statewide Workforce Investment System and those served by Community Rehabilitation Programs.

The SRL at NAU conducted a telephone survey called the Arizona VR Triennial Statewide Needs Assessment Project (SNAP) of randomly selected Arizona residents with disabilities who are limited in obtaining and/or maintaining gainful employment because of their disability. In order to qualify for the survey, respondents had to be 16 or older (parent/guardian consent if under 18), have a disability, and due to that disability need services to assist in finding or maintaining employment.

The SRL research team analyzed data collected from Arizona residents with disabilities in regard to their need for assistance with mobility, communication (in-person, writing, and/or electronic), self-care (bathing, dressing, paying bills, etc.), interpersonal skills, work skills, and tolerance to work issues. General demographic information was also collected to better classify the respondents' answers.

Data from the SRL was matched with data from the AZRSA database, Integrated Rehabilitation Information System (IRIS), to determine differences related to under-served and un-served populations.

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The fielding of the survey was conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology. CATI is a system where computers are employed to increase the accuracy, flexibility, and efficiency of telephone surveys.

Every effort was made to obtain the highest possible completion rates. Several techniques helped achieve this goal. Survey fielding utilized an established pattern of callbacks to minimize non-sampling errors that occur when certain types of people are available to answer the phone at particular times of the day. Also, a refusal conversion process helped to maintain the integrity of the original sampling framework and minimize non-response bias in sampling.

Telephone numbers that were busy, rang without being answered, or answered by an answering machine were called a minimum of ten times at different hours of different days before being removed from the sample database. Once “dead,” another phone number in the sample was substituted for the original number. This call-back procedure minimized the possibility of non-random bias.

In the case of non-English speakers, every effort was made to administer the survey in the language of the respondent.

Results

The SNAP data in this report reflects responses from 176 individuals who met the criteria and were willing to respond. This gives a confidence interval of less than +/- 8% at the 95% confidence level. Thus, if sampling assumptions were met, 95% of the time the true percentage in the population will be within 8% or less of the percentage reported. The comparison data from IRIS is the population of individuals who made an application for the VR program during the three-year period prior to April 1, 2006.

Following the initial screening process for Arizona residents with disabilities regarding their current employment status and their potential for employment, the survey begins by identifying the respondent's relationship to the person with the disability. Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents were the individual with the disability. Of the twenty-six percent (26%) who were “proxies”, over eighty percent (84%) identified themselves as the “parent or guardian” of the person with the disability; thirteen percent (13%) said they were an “other family member”; two percent (2%) were “something else”; and, there were no providers or caregivers.

Demographic Comparisons (Under-Served Issues)

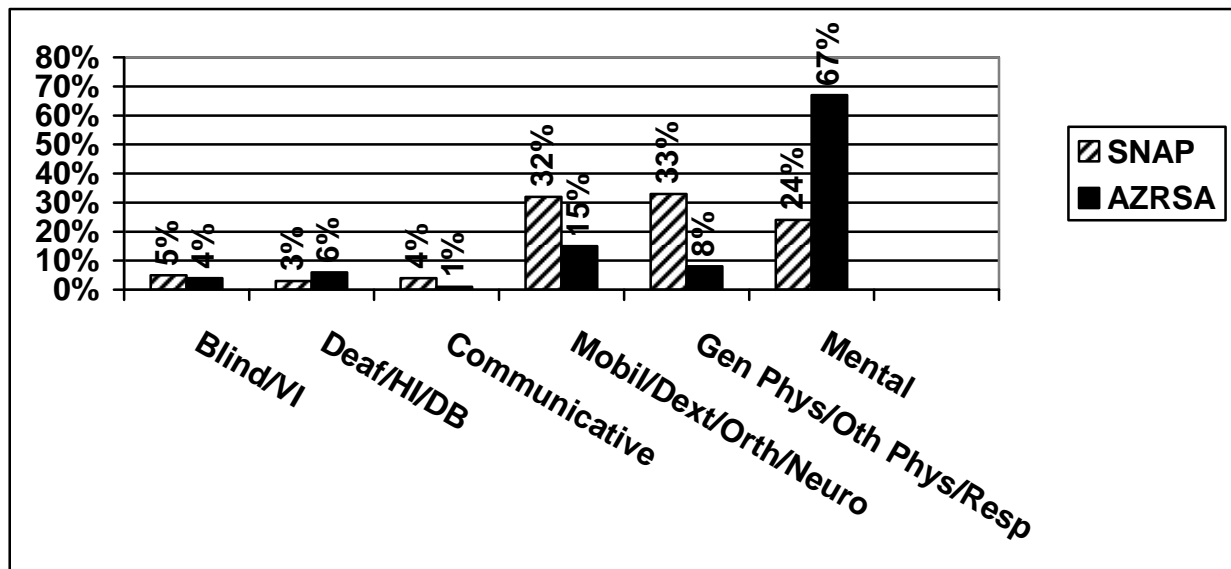
Primary Disability:

Respondents were asked to describe their primary or most severe disability that interferes with work. Their responses were coded into the 19 categories of impairments that Federal RSA requires that the AZRSA use with its clients. These 19 categories were then summarized into 5 general categories for comparison between the population as characterized by the survey and the population of individuals served by AZRSA. Table 1 presents these results. In terms of percentages of the 19 categories, the largest percentages on the SNAP were: 20.2% (vs. 3.1% AZRSA) “General Physical Debilitation”; 14.7% (vs. 28.7% AZRSA) “Cognitive Mental”; 12.9% (vs. 6.8% AZRSA) “Mobility/Ortho/Neuro”, and, 11.7% (vs. 4.2% AZRSA) “Other Physical”. The AZRSA database, IRIS, showed the largest percentages for clients who applied in the last three years: 28.7% (vs. 14.7% SNAP) “Cognitive Mental”; 27.7% (vs. 1.2% SNAP) “Psychosocial”; and 10.2% (vs. 8% SNAP) “Other Mental”. There are clearly significant differences in the proportion of primary disabilities of the population of potential VR clients and the proportion of disabilities that AZRSA has served in the last three years.

These differences become even more pronounced when similar categories are combined. Graph 1 illustrates these differences.

TABLE 1. PRIMARY DISABILITY

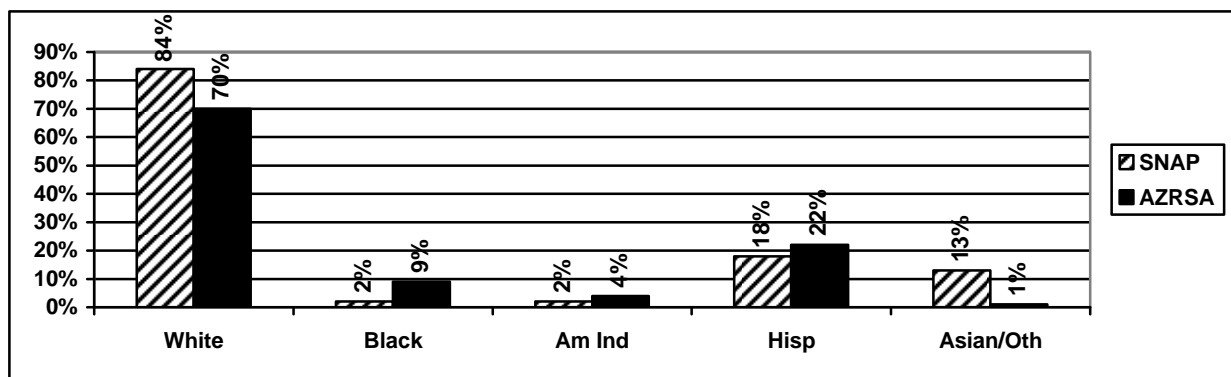
AZRSA Category	AZRSA%	SNAP %	Combined Category	AZRSA %	SNAP %
Blind	2.6%	2.5%	Blind & VI	4%	5%
Other Visual	1.1%	2.5%			
Deaf/Comm Vis	2.1%	0.6%	Deaf & HI & DB	6%	3%
Deaf/Comm Aud	0.6%	(see above)			
Hearing Loss/Vis	0.6%	2.5%			
Hearing Loss/Aud	2.0%	(see above)			
Other Hearing	0.3%	(see above)			
Deaf-Blind	0.1%				
Communicative	0.6%	3.7%	Communicative	1%	4%
Mobility/Ortho/ Neuro	6.8%	12.9%			
Manual/Dext/Orth/ Neuro	2.4%	3.1%	Mobility/Dext/Orth/ Neuro	15%	32%
Both Mobility & Dext	3.7%	4.4%			
Other Ortho (LOR)	2.6%	8.6%			
Respiratory	0.5%	0.6%			
General Physical Debil	3.1%	20.2%	Gen Phys/Oth Phys/Resp	8%	33%
Other	4.2%	11.7%			
Cognitive	28.7%	14.7%			
Psychosocial	27.7%	1.2%	Mental	67%	24%
Other Mental	10.2%	8.0%			
Total	100%	100%		100%	100%

GRAPH 1. CONSOLIDATED PRIMARY DISABILITY COMPARISON

It is clear that in the population of Arizona residents who are potential VR clients, physical disabilities (excluding sensory) predominate, whereas in the clients the AZRSA is currently serving, mental disabilities predominate. Even allowing for significant violations of sampling assumptions and coding errors, the differences are too large to falsely indicate that a true and sizeable difference exists. It is highly likely that individuals with physical disabilities are being underserved by the ASRSA at this time.

Minority Status:

Graph 2 presents data on race and ethnicity, comparing the SNAP results with the AZRSA.

GRAPH 2. RACE/ETHNICITY

There are some differences in how the data is coded in the IRIS database with the way the data was collected in the SNAP. The Federal reporting requirements mix race and ethnicity in the primary coding fields, allowing an individual who reports as Hispanic (ethnicity) to not also report a race; it is likely that the "other" on the SNAP included some Hispanics. The figures for the AZRSA add to more than 100%, since an individual could code more than one race/ethnicity and was counted as that ethnicity if it was coded in any field. In addition, it is also likely that minorities are at least somewhat underrepresented in the SNAP due to the

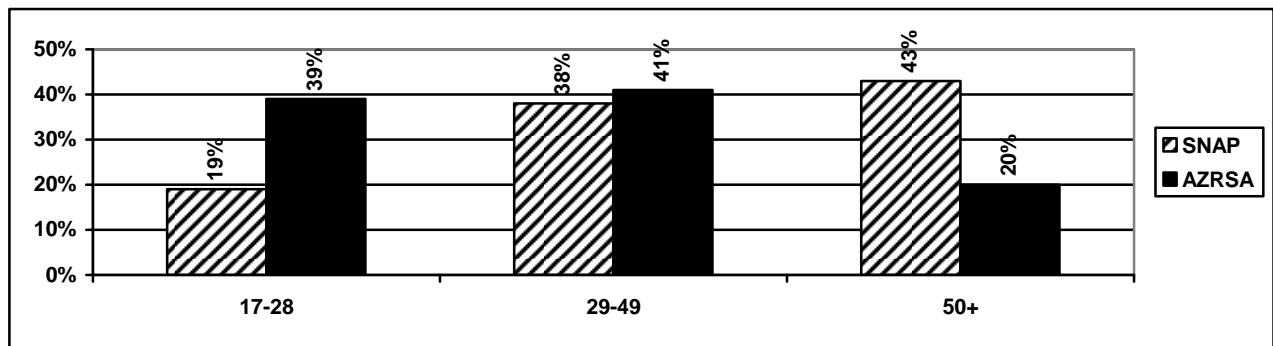
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telephone nature of the survey. Nevertheless, it is likely that the AZRSA is under-serving Whites and it is unlikely that AZRSA is under-serving minorities and Hispanics in particular.

Age:

As shown in Graph 3, the AZRSA appears to be over-serving those aged 17-28 and under-serving those 50+.

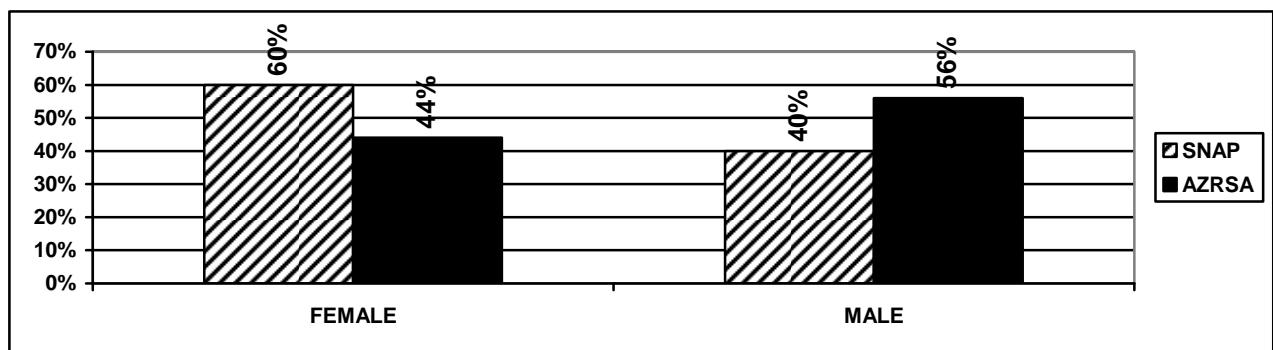
GRAPH 3. AGE



Gender:

As shown in Graph 4, the AZRSA appears to be under-serving women.

GRAPH 4. GENDER



Marital Status:

The SNAP results show that 33% of the population of potential VR consumers is married; whereas, the IRIS data shows that only 17% of those served were married. These results may be a product of age and other differences reported previously (e.g., higher percent married with increasing age).

Employment-Related Rehabilitation Needs

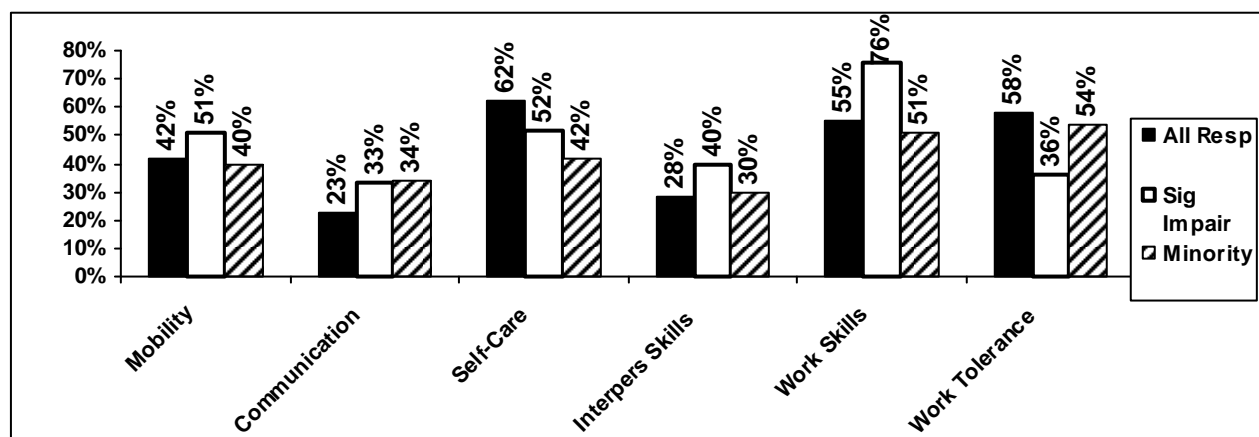
In addition to analyzing the needs of all respondents as a group (n=176), an analysis was done of individuals who may be considered “significantly and most significantly impaired” (n = 141) as well as for minorities (n = 38). Significantly impaired were identified by their report of needing significant services in two or more of the six life areas. Results from the group as a whole, as well as for those designated significantly impaired and for minorities are reported.

Six Major Need Areas:

Respondents were asked if they needed assistance or if they could function on their own in each of six major need areas. As shown in Graph 5, the greatest number of all respondents, sixty-two percent (62%), indicated a need for assistance with “self care,” followed by needs for assistance in “work tolerance” (58%), “work skills” (55%), and “mobility” (42%). The lowest need areas for all respondents were “communication” (23%) and “interpersonal skills” (28%). In contrast, those significantly impaired showed the biggest need for assistance with “work skills” (76%), followed by “self care” and “mobility” at 52% and 51% respectively. Among minorities, the biggest need areas are “work tolerance” (54%) and “work skills” (51%), and the lowest are “interpersonal skills” (30%) and “communication” (34%).

Since it is clear that the AZRSA is serving a different mix of primary disabilities than represented by respondents in the SNAP, it is logical that the mix of needs represented by SNAP respondents are different than the emphasis of needs of individuals currently served by the AZRSA.

GRAPH 5. NEEDS ASSISTANCE IN THE SIX MAJOR AREAS



Summary of Needs Within the Six Major Areas:

Mobility

- Out of the 406 possible respondents in the SNAP study, a need for mobility assistance was reported by 170 of those respondents (42%).
- The need for mobility assistance was broken down into specific subcategories. The top areas of needs chosen by respondents who need mobility assistance in this subgroup are: “moving around the home or community”; “locating equipment and services”; and “getting transportation to work”. Over half require help “identifying what they would need to increase their mobility”, and half of respondents need help “using public transportation”.
- Additional (“other”) needs to improve mobility are “personal and household assistants” and “improved transportation,” including “bus passes” which are particularly important for minority communities.

Communication

- The need for communication assistance was reported by 100 SNAP respondents.
- The primary areas of communication needs for the respondent subgroup who need communication assistance are “preparing a résumé” and “getting information about advancing their career”. Nearly three quarters need help “preparing for job interviews”. Two-thirds require assistance “asking for help at work”, “using information from printed materials, signs, the radio, or television”, and “communicating in person”.
- Minority respondents report a slightly higher likelihood to require assistance in “preparing a resume”, “using media materials”, and “communicating in person”.

Self-Care

- The need for self-care assistance was reported by 154 SNAP respondents (38%).
- Of the 38 percent of respondents who said they need help with self-care, two-thirds said they require assistance with “obtaining clothing for work”, “understanding SSI, SSDI, welfare, state disability, health insurance, etc.”, or assistance with their “ability to do daily activities such as feeding, dressing, and bathing”, and “being sure the attendant meets their needs”.
- “Other” self-care needs showed that two-thirds of “all respondents” with self-care assistance needs are interested in “acquiring an attendant or assistant to help with preparing meals, household cleaning, and maintaining their personal hygiene”. Acquiring an attendant or assistant for basic household and personal needs is especially important for minorities.

Interpersonal Skills

- The need for interpersonal skills assistance was reported by 121 SNAP respondents (30%).
- Of those 121 respondents who need assistance with interpersonal skills, about two-thirds said they require assistance with “receiving instructions from others”.

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“Significantly impaired” persons within the same subgroup said they also need assistance with “receiving instructions”.

- Minority Arizonans are more likely to report a need for help in “receiving instructions from others” to gain or maintain employment in contrast to “all respondents” who need interpersonal skills assistance.
- Minorities with disabilities identified needing assistance “giving instructions to others in a work situation”, which is slightly greater than “all respondents” that need interpersonal skills assistance. However, minority respondents are slightly less likely to require “help getting along with others in the work place” than “all respondents” and “significantly impaired” persons with disabilities.
- Nearly one quarter of persons with a need for assistance with interpersonal skills suggest anger/attitude management, or assistance coping with people in general when responding to “other” interpersonal skill needs.

Work Skills

- The need for work skills assistance was reported by 221 SNAP respondents.
- Of those 221 respondents who said they need work skills assistance, two-thirds said they require assistance in “completing job tasks”, need help “keeping a job once they are employed”, and require help “starting activities like job or training tasks”, and “planning or organizing job tasks”.
- Respondents who provided an answer to “other” work skills assistance said they need further “education and training” (computer technology for example) to gain or maintain employment. Seventeen percent require “extended supervision and extended task completion time”, and an additional 10 percent need “assistive equipment, furniture, or computer software”.

Work Tolerance Skills

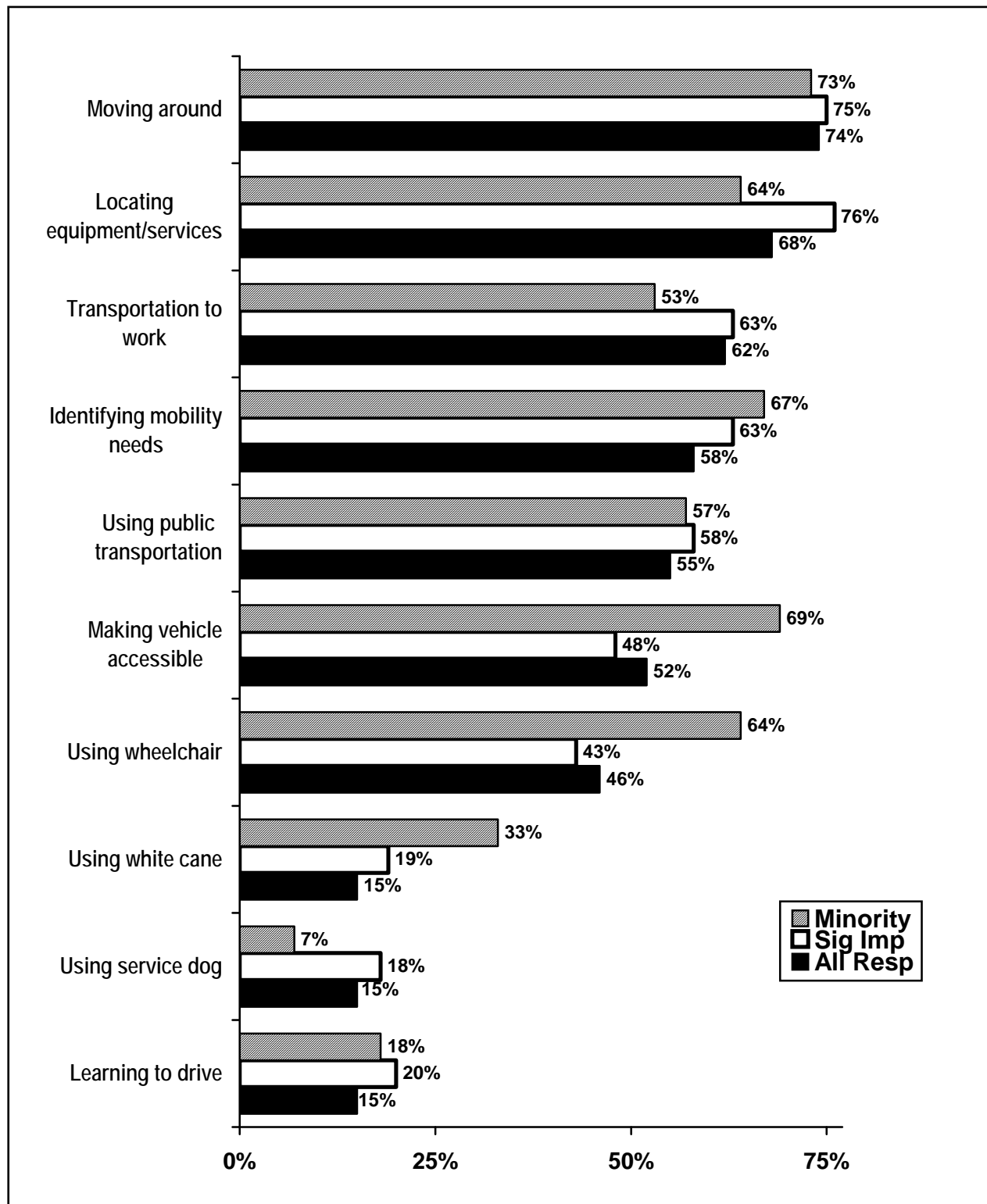
- The need for work tolerance skills assistance was reported by 218 SNAP respondents (58%). However, work tolerance issues are considerably more important for respondents who also share minority status.
- Most Arizonans with disabilities who need work tolerance skills assistance within the “all respondents” subgroup require assistance “determining the work tolerance needed for certain jobs”. Two-thirds of “all respondents” need help “determining how computers or other technology might help at work”, but this is considerably more important to minority respondents.
- Two-thirds of “all respondents,” minorities with disabilities and “significantly impaired” respondents are interested in “learning how to meet their medical needs while at work at a level that fulfills job requirements”.
- Arizonans with disabilities who responded to “other” work tolerance assistance needs said they require “more time to complete work tasks and need a flexible work schedule” to accommodate their disabilities (22% for “all respondents;” 26% for minority respondents).

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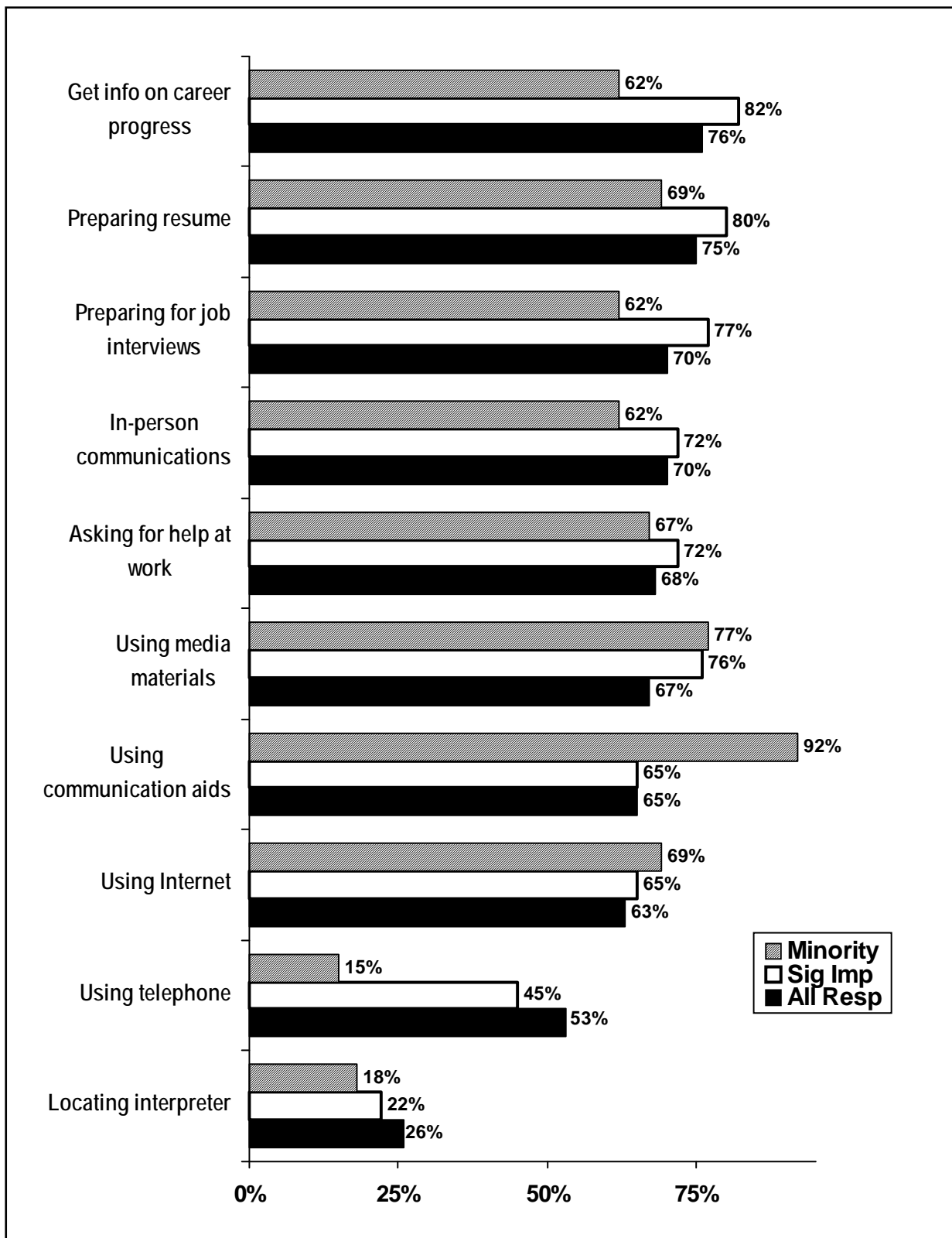
- Several of the Arizonans with disabilities who said they need “other” help with work tolerance skills report a need for “better treatment (patience and respect, for example) from employers and coworkers.”

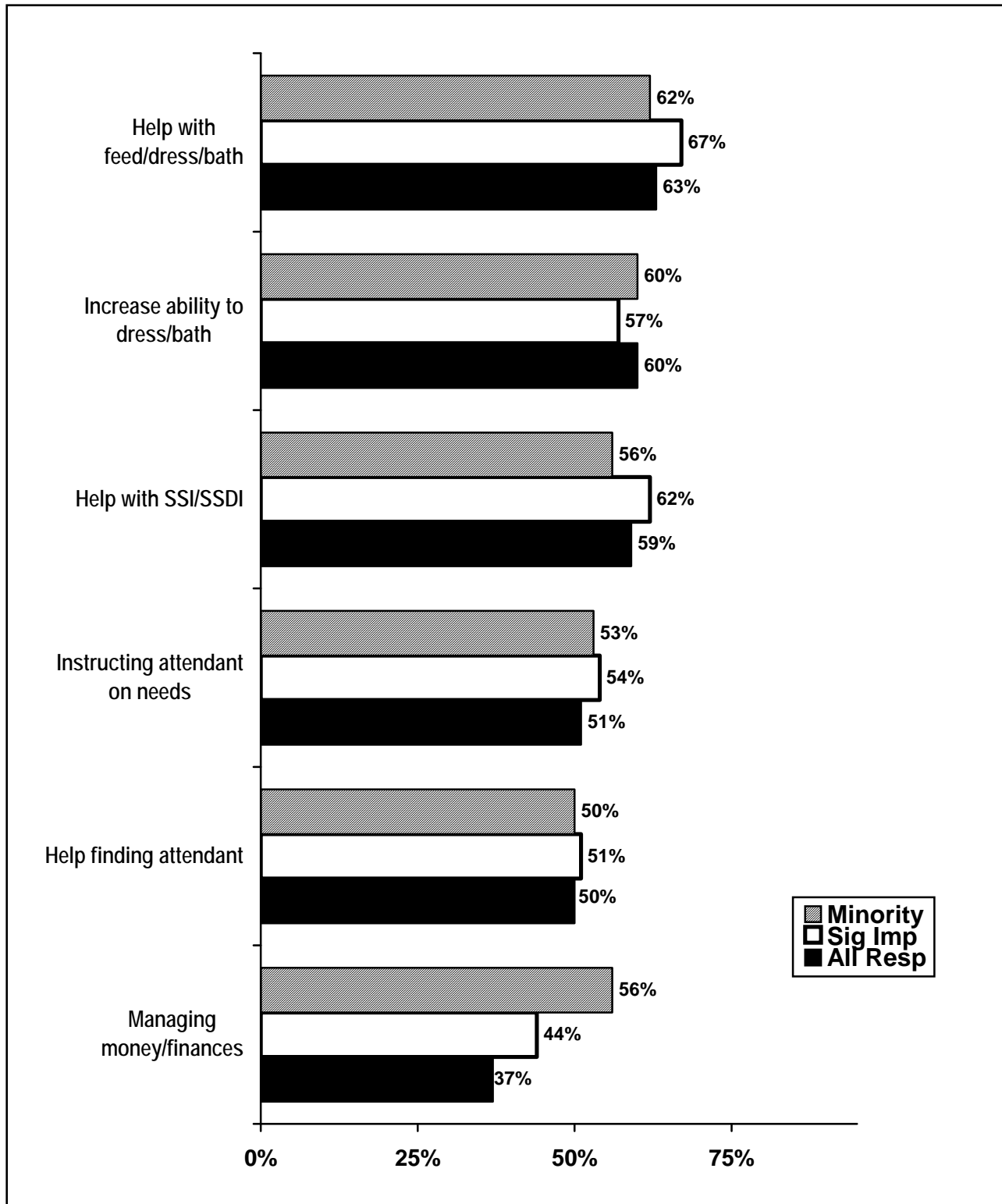
Over half of “all respondents” and three quarters of minorities, said work tolerance and work skills are the greatest issues. Over half of “significantly impaired” respondents, nearly half of “all respondents”, and over one third of minority respondents consider mobility issues as the second greatest needs assistance area.

GRAPH 6. MOBILITY NEEDS

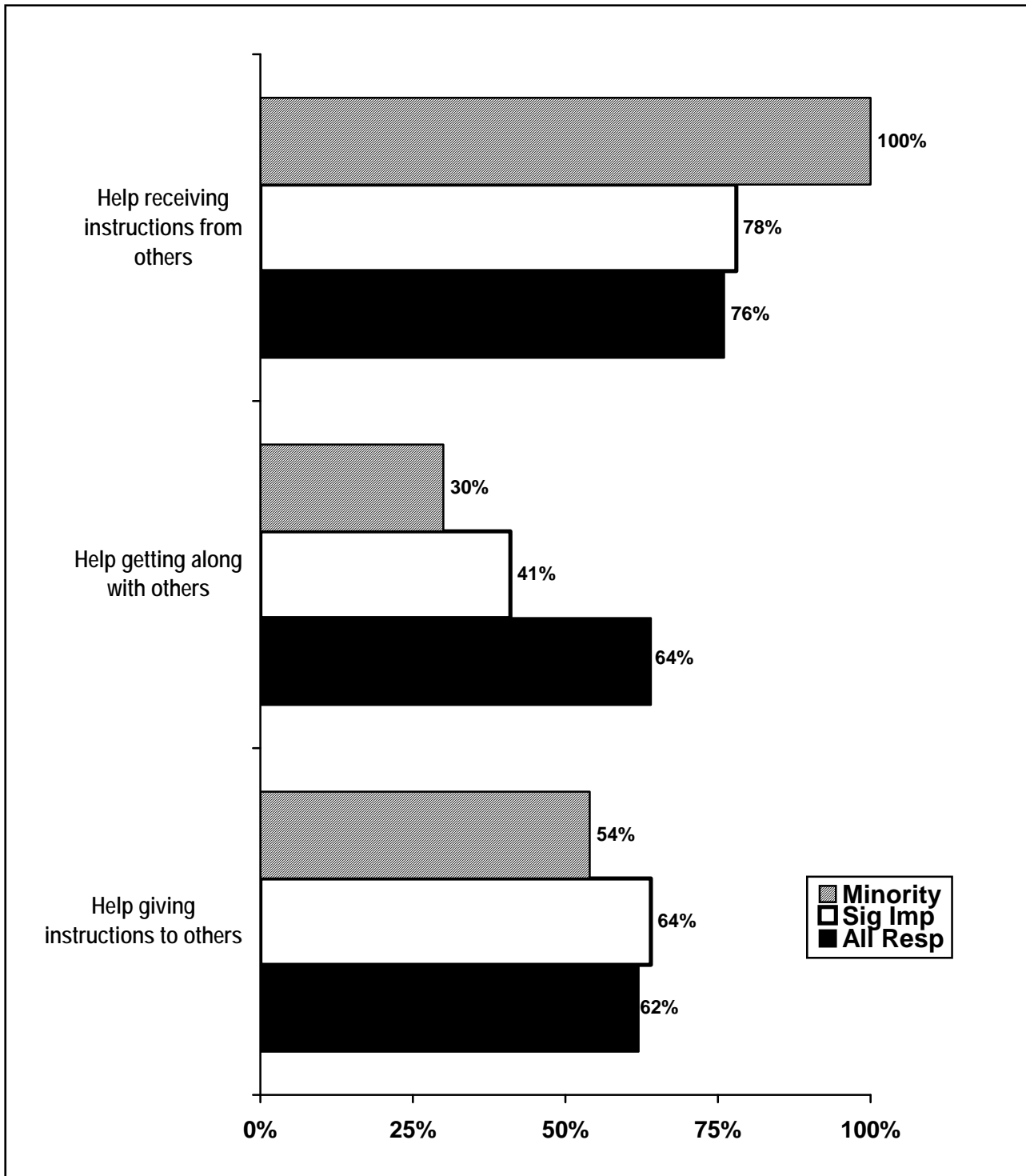


GRAPH 7. COMMUNICATION NEEDS

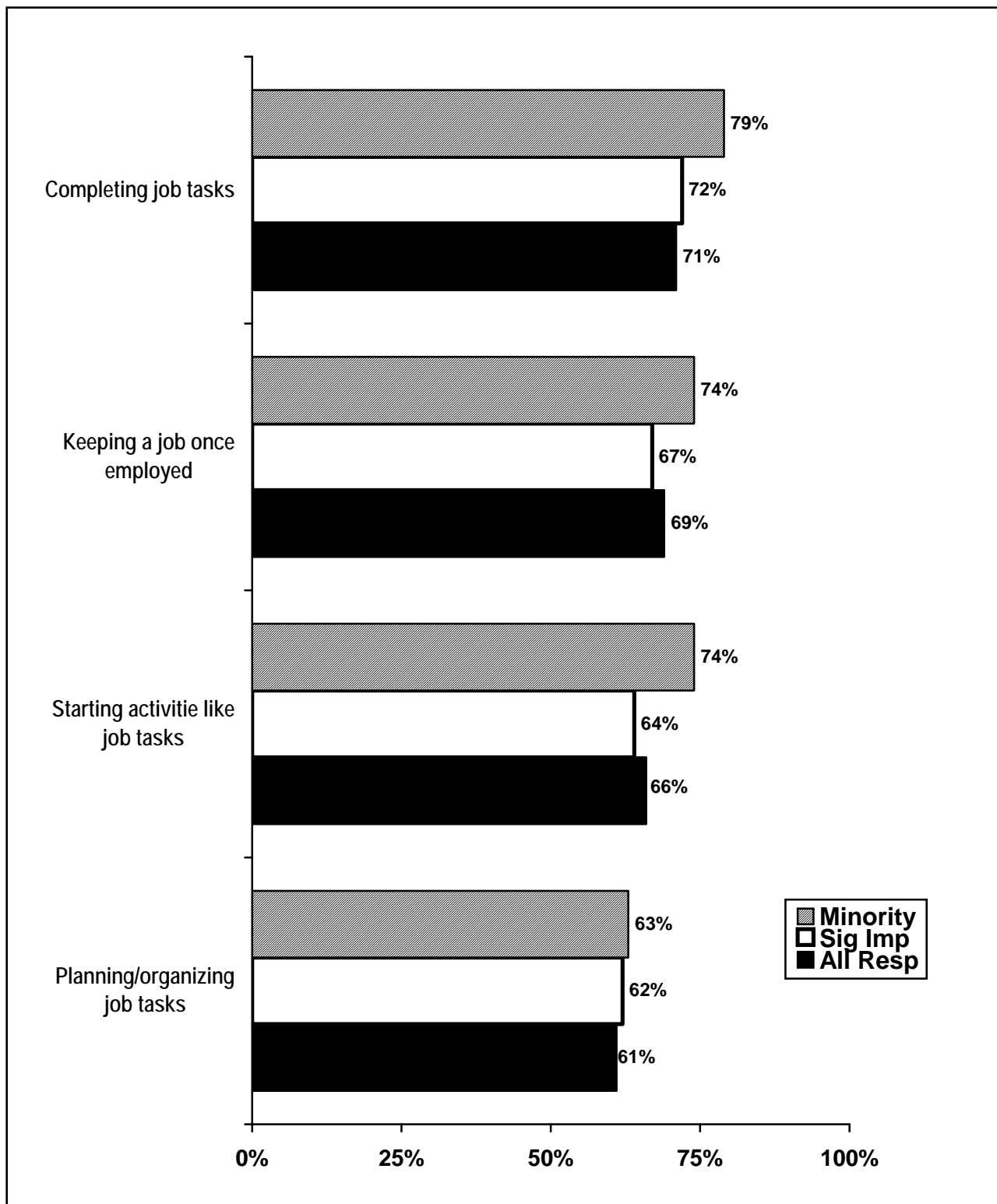




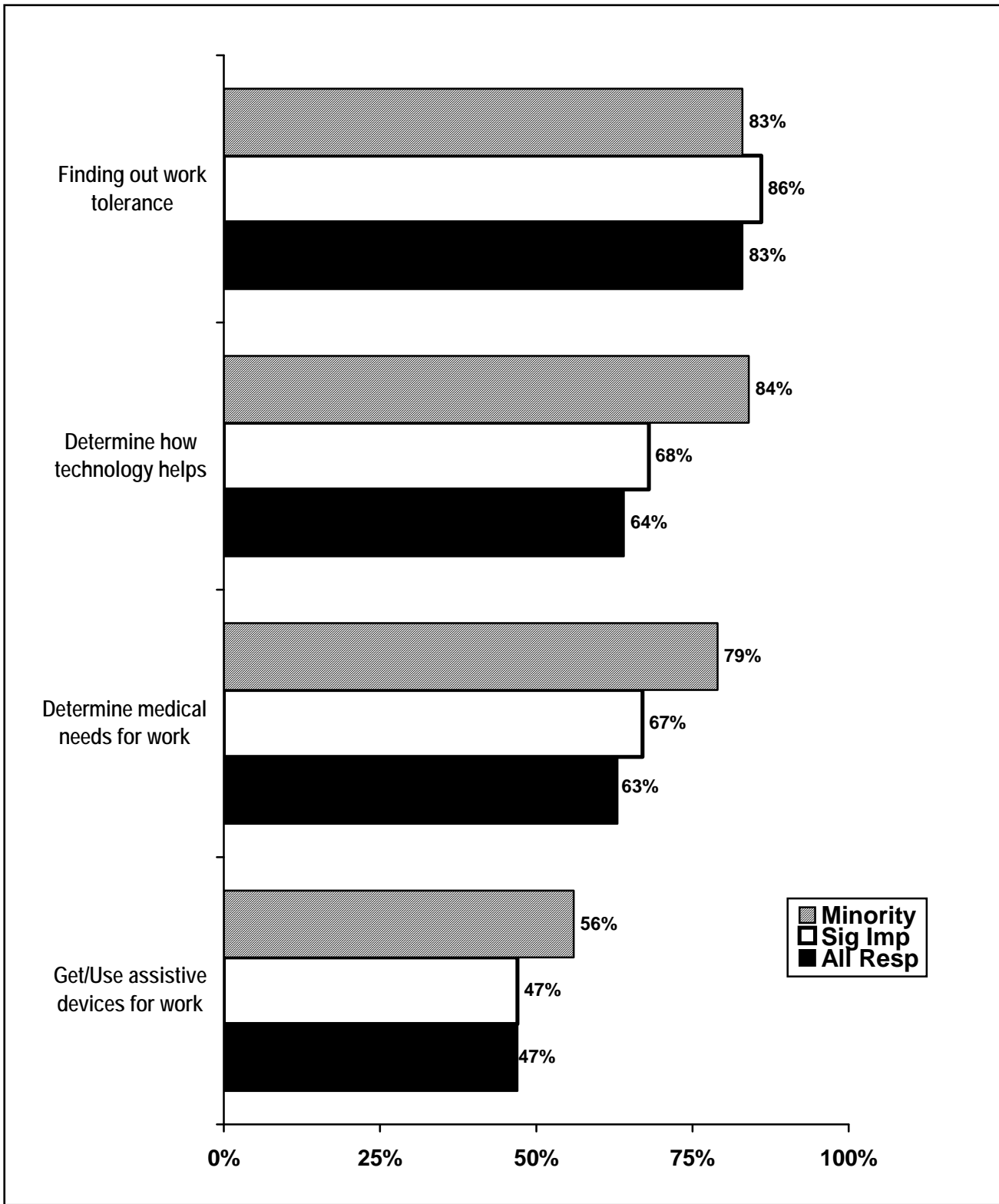
GRAPH 8. SELF-CARE NEEDS



GRAPH 9. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS NEEDS



GRAPH 10. WORK SKILLS NEEDS



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With respect to work tolerance needs (Graph 11), “finding out about work tolerance needs in certain jobs” was reported by 83% or more of all groups and had the highest reported percentages. “Getting or using assistive devices for work” was the lowest rated item, yet “determining how technology could help at work” was the second highest rated item, with 84% of minorities reporting this need. Apparently, potential clients feel more confident they can get the devices if they knew what they were or how they could help.